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Letter dated 23 July 2013 from the Permanent Representatives of Gabon and Germany to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On 20 June 2013, the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations in New York, together with the Permanent Mission of Gabon and the International Peace Institute (IPI), hosted a panel discussion on the theme "Poaching as a threat to international peace and security: options for the United Nations". A meeting brief was prepared by IPI (see annex).

Poaching and the illicit trade in wildlife are increasing at alarming rates. Germany and Gabon are particularly concerned about this development, as poaching not only poses a threat to global biodiversity but also fuels regional conflicts and contributes to instability. Rebel groups benefiting from poaching, such as the Lord's Resistance Army in the Great Lakes region in Africa, commit serious human rights violations. As various reports by the Secretary-General and the expert groups of different Security Council sanctions committees have stressed, poaching and the illicit trade in wildlife are often linked to armed groups, organized crime and the illegal arms trade and, as such, can pose a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is against this backdrop that Germany and Gabon initiated the meeting on 20 June. Our aim was to raise awareness of the growing issue of poaching and to explore options for the United Nations, including the Security Council, to address this challenge. The discussion showed that, besides various options at the bilateral level and at the level of the General Assembly, the Security Council has at its disposal various options and tools that can help it to tackle the issue of poaching, without encroaching on the competence of other United Nations organs.

For example, the Council could, where appropriate, declare the illegal ivory trade and poaching a threat to international peace and security. It could expand the criteria of sanctions regimes and be prepared to impose targeted sanctions on those involved in poaching and the illicit ivory and wildlife trade to the benefit of armed groups in cases where these are subject to a United Nations arms embargo. As in other sanctions regimes, the listing of individuals for targeted measures would also have an important public effect.

Furthermore, the Council could encourage States, particularly in Central and East Africa, to strengthen cooperation with regard to investigating and prosecuting criminal networks and armed groups involved in poaching and the illicit trade in ivory and other wildlife products. In addition, the Council could make explicit reference

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to the ivory trade when reiterating existing sanctions criteria that relate to the illicit trade in natural resources, as in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such stronger emphasis by the Security Council on, inter alia, the ivory trade could help to strengthen related reporting by the expert groups of its sanctions committees.

Lastly, United Nations peacekeeping missions could play a more active role in addressing poaching and the illicit trade in wildlife. Relevant missions could be mandated to expand their support to actors fighting poaching, such as wildlife organizations and park administrations. The peacekeeping missions could provide these groups with support, including logistics, intelligence and training, as well as sharing of information and best practices.

In the light of the variety of options and tools at the Council's disposal, we recommend a multidimensional approach that comprises action at the level of sanctions as well as at the level of the mandates of the relevant peacekeeping missions.

We should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nelson **Messone**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Gabon

(*Signed*) Hans Peter **Wittig**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Germany

Annex to the letter dated 23 July 2013 from the Permanent Representatives of Gabon and Germany to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Poaching as a threat to international peace and security: options for the United Nations

Meeting brief

Poaching is not only an environmental issue. Increasingly, it is becoming a development, gender, health and security issue, which calls for holistic approaches to end the demand for wildlife products and communities' dependence on poaching. This was the key message that emerged from a policy forum organized by the International Peace Institute together with the Permanent Missions of Germany and Gabon to the United Nations on 20 June 2013.

The policy forum addressed a range of issues, from the impact of poaching on the environment, the economy and peace and security to the need for enhanced policy effectiveness. The link between poaching and organized crime, social destabilization and armed conflict was highlighted. Three panellists represented, respectively, the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the African Parks Foundation and the Brookings Institution.

The discussion offered a number of insights into the risks posed by poaching and useful policy recommendations:

- Poaching involves a complex network of actors, including criminal and armed groups like the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa. Building on poor governance, corruption and communities' lack of economic opportunities, poaching contributes to social destabilization and poses serious risks to biodiversity. By fuelling conflict, poaching also constitutes a growing threat to international peace and security.

- Poaching is unlikely to be eliminated unless the demand for ivory and other wildlife products is significantly reduced. Constructive dialogue must be part of strategies aimed at changing traditional beliefs in countries where the growing demand for ivory reinforces the economic value of poaching in local communities in Africa.

- Urgent action is also needed at the source. Response options must tackle the root causes of poaching while ensuring communities' involvement and ownership. Equitable sharing of resources from ecotourism projects must provide durable alternatives to poaching as a source of livelihoods and social mobility. Depending on the context, legal trade — if allowed — should be coupled with effective law enforcement.

- The enforcement of existing regulations needs to be strengthened. Law enforcement efforts should target poachers on the ground and sanction complicity between officials and criminal networks. These efforts must also fight corruption and impunity at higher levels of government.

- At the international level, strategies used in the Security Council's sanctions regimes could be extended to poaching. "Naming and shaming" of alleged perpetrators could be applied to armed groups, including the national army of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose involvement in poaching has been established.

- A stronger emphasis by the Security Council on the ivory trade could help to strengthen related investigations by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, the due diligence guidelines for multinational companies involved in the exploitation of mineral resources could be broadened to include products from poaching and the illicit wildlife trade.

- The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could provide the Group of Experts with support, including logistics, intelligence and training, as well as sharing of information.